

Anchorage District



Anchorage District news

Since the last RAC meeting, the Anchorage District welcomed an Associate District Manager and two Field Managers.



Associate District Manager Callie Webber has been with BLM for over 20 years, half of which has been in Alaska. She earned her bachelor's degree from Texas A&M University and began her BLM career as an Outdoor Recreation Planner in Eastern Oregon. Since that time, she's held a variety of positions in Idaho, New Mexico, and Alaska related to multiple use management of public lands. Callie continues to build partnerships to promote BLM-Alaska goals, maximize efficiencies, and support Anchorage District employees.



Anchorage Field Manager Alan Bittner joined the BLM-Alaska team in December 2012. Alan moved to Alaska from Nevada, where he served as Assistant Field Manager in Carson City for four years. Previously he worked for over 15 years with the U.S. Forest Service and the BLM in Idaho. Alan now oversees 17 million acres of BLM-administered lands and resources at the Anchorage Field Office. Alan holds a bachelor's degree in biology from Cornerstone University of Michigan.



Glennallen Field Manager Dennis Teitzel: After serving 30 years in the U.S. Marine Corps, Dennis retired and went to work for the BLM. He worked 4 years in Butte, Montana, as the District Administrative Officer and recently hales from Billings where he served as Branch Chief in the Montana State Office. Dennis and his wife Carol, who teleworks for the U.S. Forest Service Region 10 office in Juneau, have both spent a lot of time in Alaska over the years and now look forward to settling into the Copper River Basin.

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives: The Anchorage District is a partner in four Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC) in Alaska: the Western Alaska LCC (WALCC), Northwest Boreal LCC (NWBLCC), North Pacific LCC, and Aleutian and Bering Seas LCC. LCCs are interagency partnerships, led by the USFWS, to investigate and understand climate change and its effects. The Anchorage District is most active in the WALCC and NWBLCC, which correspond with the majority of the lands we manage. The WALCC recently completed a two-year funding cycle to research issues related to climate change effects in coastal areas, such as shoreline erosion and storm patterns, and is in the midst of a two-year funding cycle to research issues related to climate change effects to freshwater, including water temperature. The third funding cycle will begin in FY15 and will address climate change effects to terrestrial resources, after which the cycle will return to coastal issues. The newly formed NWBLCC is currently working to define priority research topics. To that end, a 3-day workshop is scheduled in November to refine and finalize short- and medium-term priorities for the LCC.



The LCCs perform an important function in providing seed money to initiate and support research into climate change effects in Alaska and provide a forum for federal, state, and tribal partners to work together to investigate these issues. The resulting data will help to inform decision making amongst the various partners.

Colocation comes to Campbell Tract: The Campbell Tract Facility (CTF) administrative site is home to the Anchorage District and other BLM offices. Other federal agencies have expressed interest in colocation to CTF. The 34,000-square-foot administrative office is about 30 percent vacant at this time.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will enter into a colocation agreement for office, warehouse and storage yard space beginning March 1, 2014. BLM is also in negotiations with the U.S. Geological Survey for office, lab, shop and warehouse space. Should both agencies move in with their proposed space requests, this would reduce vacancy to less than 10 percent and provide rental to help defray CTF maintenance costs. The 730-acre Campbell Tract Facility is withdrawn for use as a BLM administrative site through 2022.



Statewide Education, Interpretation, and Youth

Engagement: Over the last year, BLM-Alaska worked with our agency and non-governmental partners to develop a statewide strategy for Education, Interpretation, and Youth Engagement. Our goal is to take advantage of the many centers of excellence in Alaska, including the BLM Campbell Creek Science Center (CCSC) and Arctic Interagency Visitor Center (AIVC), to provide improved and better coordinated services to rural and urban communities across Alaska.

Over the last year, we increased our coordination within BLM-Alaska through joint projects between CCSC, AIVC, and Glennallen Field Office youth education staff to deliver youth programs. Staff shared instruction time, resources, teaching techniques, ideas, and activities. The effort will have lasting enrichment on our programs. Community partners were grateful for the infusion of fresh ideas and enthusiasm into existing programs. Over the next six months, we expect to finalize and prioritize our strategy and continue implementation with our partners.

Anchorage Field Office news

Donlin Gold EIS process underway: BLM is a cooperating agency in the Donlin Gold Environmental Impact Statement process. Donlin Gold LLC proposes to develop an open pit gold mine 10 miles north of Crooked Creek on the Kuskokwim River. A 313-mile natural gas pipeline from Cook Inlet to the mine site is also proposed as the energy source for the mine. Approximately 105 miles of the proposed pipeline route are on BLM-managed land.

The Army Corps of Engineers is the lead agency of the EIS team. In January-March 2013, the team held public scoping meetings in 13 villages and Anchorage. BLM attended many of the scoping meetings to hear community concerns and comments. The team is now using scoping comments to develop alternatives for the Draft EIS, to be released in 2014.



Haines Block Amendment, Ring of Fire RMP/EIS: This land use plan amendment evaluates whether portions of the planning block meet the requirements for Area of Critical Environmental Concern designation; whether to retain the Special Recreation Management Area designation; whether to retain the current

Monitoring and Control Area no-helicopter landing zone for ongoing wildlife studies; and whether to establish a maximum number of recreation-related helicopter landings on BLM-managed lands in the planning area.

The Draft EIS was released for public review in December 2012; the public comment period closed in March 2013. BLM reviewed and analyzed all public comments received. Public comments indicated new issues for consideration. In early 2014, BLM will begin work on a Supplemental EIS to evaluate the new information and issues, additional alternatives, and subsequent impact analyses.

TERRA Northwest Phase III permits issued: GCI continues to expand its TERRA broadband communications network in western Alaska, and BLM-managed public lands provide key sites for communications towers necessary to connect communities along the TERRA route. In July, BLM authorized five communication towers for the TERRA Northwest Phase III project that will expand the terrestrial broadband system from Nome to Kotzebue. Helicopter support work for construction of the towers began in earnest this past season, with additional field work planned for 2014. GCI anticipates future expansion of the TERRA project east to the Dalton Highway.

Red Devil Mine investigation continues: BLM moved forward with the Red Devil Mine Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study in 2013. Sampling conducted during the investigation confirmed that tailings have moved into the streambed at Red Devil Creek. BLM will conduct an early action in 2014 to prevent future movement of tailings into the river. Other environmental impacts resulting from the tailings will be addressed as part of site-wide remedial action in the Proposed Plan.

BLM will continue to coordinate with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency throughout the project. Community engagement also remains an important component of the project. BLM used project newsletters and websites to keep communities informed during 2013. BLM will offer a workshop at the next Alaska Forum on the Environment (Feb. 2014). BLM will also contact Kuskokwim communities to schedule community meetings and tribal consultations in the spring of 2014, prior to conducting any early response action.



Nixon Fork Mine compliance issues resolved: Throughout the 2013 mining season, Nixon Fork Mine operators completed activities to fulfill requirements of noncompliance orders issued by BLM earlier in the year. By August the mine had completed all of the requirements outlined in the orders.

Current gold market values forced the mine into care and maintenance status for an undetermined period of time. Nixon Fork Mine will stay in a temporary shutdown until market conditions improve. The two large hardrock explorations in AFO, Constantine Metal Resources near Haines and Graphite One near Nome, have seen substantial infusions of money from external investors and are

pursuing aggressive projects with hopes of developing the resources for market. **PHOTO: Evaporation dewatering system at Nixon Fork Mine tailings pond, August 2013**

Iditarod goes to the Fair! One of the wettest Alaska State Fairs on record didn't dampen the spirit of Iditarod enthusiasts from Nome to Norway. More than 2,300 fair goers from across Alaska, the Lower 48, and several other countries visited the Iditarod Historic Trail "Roadhouse" exhibit at the 2013 State Fair. Wall tents

reminiscent of the Iditarod roadhouses of yesterday (including antique wood stove!) featured Iditarod memorabilia, maps, information and friendly staffers. The nonprofit Iditarod Alliance, BLM, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, and Chugach National Forest provided staffing for the 12-day event.

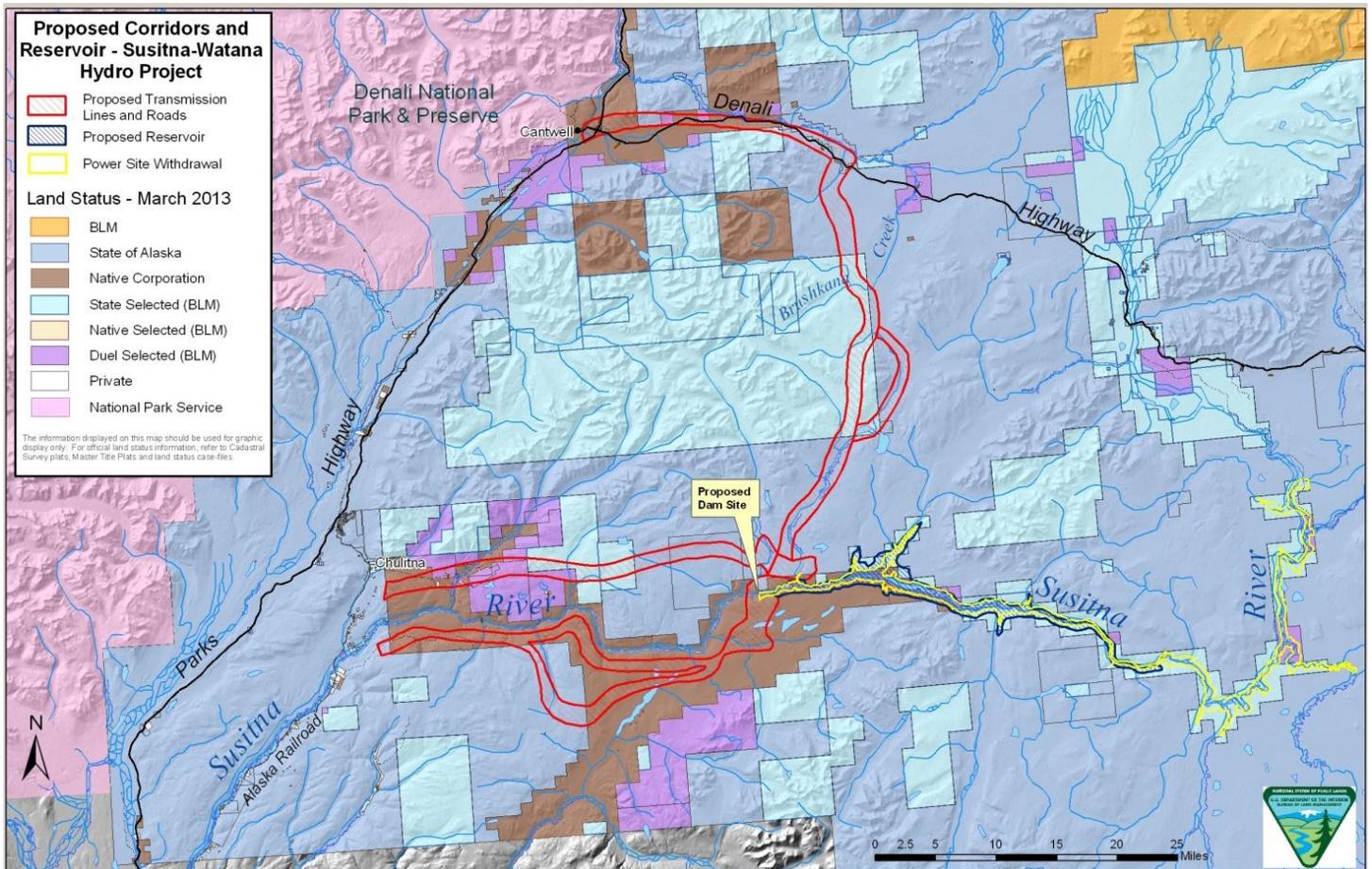


BLM and the Alliance began hosting the Fair exhibit in 2009 as part of a multi-year Iditarod Trail Centennial celebration. BLM provided the majority of staffing during the first years of the exhibit. Partners now provide 75 percent of the staffing support for this popular Iditarod partnership event.

COOL TIP: If you're an Iditarod Trail enthusiast, mark your calendars for the Ceremonial Start of the 2014 Iditarod Sled Dog Race at the BLM Campbell Tract on March 1, 2014!

Glennallen Field Office news

Susitna-Watana Dam Proposal: The Alaska Energy Authority (AEA) proposes to construct a hydroelectric dam, approximately 700-800 feet high with a 39-mile reservoir, on the Susitna River. The project includes two possible transmission routes and one access road from either the Parks or Denali Highway to the dam site. AEA has research study plans underway and will apply for the permit in 2015. Portions of the proposed project are on State-selected lands. The State of Alaska asked BLM and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to open the Power Site Classification on the Susitna River in order to convey the lands to the State. Meetings are underway with BLM Washington Office personnel and Solicitors to determine the legal issues and consequences that must be considered to respond to the State's request.



Delta and Gulkana river management: The Delta River Special Recreation Management Area/East Alaska RMP Amendment was approved in March 2013, providing guidance for recreation management of the area for the next 15-20 years. The public and stakeholders identified adaptive management actions during the Gulkana River management planning process. Despite education and outreach efforts, GFO continues to document evidence of human waste and litter levels well beyond acceptable limits identified in the plan. GFO is developing special rules for the river corridor to protect the river's natural resources and enhance public health and safety.

A seasonal river ranger and summer intern completed eight patrols of the Delta and Gulkana rivers this year and made 37 visitor contacts to discuss rules and regulations, Leave-No-Trace river ethics, and current river management plans. They also removed 100 gallons of trash and one wrapped canoe from the Delta River corridor and 300 gallons of trash from the Gulkana. BLM completed a Gulkana campsite inventory and monitoring of indicators as mandated in the revised 2006 Gulkana River Management Plan. BLM also completed an invasive weeds inventory, control, and monitoring of previous eradication efforts on both the Delta and Gulkana rivers.



Spring breakup campground damage: Paxson Lake and the Gulkana River had record flood events this year during breakup, causing considerable damage to both the Sourdough Creek and Paxson Lake campgrounds. The campground boat launch areas went completely under ice and water. A picnic table was deposited 12 feet up in a tree; interpretive panels were mowed over; and Sourdough Creek threatened the access bridge to the campground and filled the Sourdough Creek Campground trail with mud and debris. While temporary repairs were made to open the campgrounds, permanent repairs are ongoing. **PHOTO: Paxson Campground culverts washed out, preventing access to the second camping loop.**

Valdez Creek mining operations: The Glennallen Field Office is working on several mining applications and operations plans for the Valdez Creek Mining area. Disputes amongst mining claimants and operators have placed holds on some applications. GFO staff visited the Valdez Creek area this summer to gather baseline data and to conduct a current condition inventory. GFO also collected fisheries and hydrology data along portions of Valdez Creek.

The mine plan for Valdez Creek Mining Company is currently on hold while the company resolves several legal issues. BLM expects that the mine plan for Ellet Enterprises and NEPA documents to be completed in time for the 2014 mining season. BLM will meet with pertinent claimants during the week of the Alaska Miners Association conference to discuss further activities and claim acquisitions. BLM issued a noncompliance notice to an operator on upper White Creek for failure to prevent unnecessary and undue degradation, maintain appropriate occupancy, and maintain bonding liability. BLM is working with the miner to resolve the noncompliance.

